

as, to *act*, or derivative, as *action*, *actionable*, *active*, *activity*. This will much facilitate the attainment of our language, which now stands in our dictionaries a confused heap of words without dependence, and without relation.

WHEN this part of the work is performed, it will be necessary to inquire how our primitives are to be deduced from foreign languages, which may be often very successfully performed by the assistance of our own etymologists. This search will give occasion to many curious disquisitions, and sometimes perhaps to conjectures, which, to readers unacquainted with this kind of study, cannot but appear improbable and capricious. But it may be reasonably imagined, that what is so much in the power of men as language, will very often be capriciously conducted. Nor are these disquisitions and conjectures to be considered altogether as wanton sports of wit, or vain shews of learning; our language is well known not to be primitive or self-originated, but to have adopted words of every generation, and either for the supply of its necessities, or the encrease of its copiousness, to have received additions from very distant regions; so that in search of the progenitors of our speech, we may wander from the tropic to the frozen zone, and find some in the vallies of Palestine and some upon the rocks of Norway.

BESIDE

BESIDE the derivation of particular words, likewise an etymology of phrases. Expressions often taken from other languages, some appear to *run a risque*, *courir un risque*; and some we do not seem to borrow their words; thus *about* or *accomplish*, appears an English phrase, reality our native word *about* has no such, and it is only a French expression, of which we have an example in the common phrase, *venir à l'affaire*.

IN exhibiting the descent of our language, etymologists seem to have been too lavish of learning, having traced almost every word to various tongues, only to shew what was sufficiently by the first derivation. This practice has great use in synoptical lexicons, where obscure and doubtful languages are explained by affinity to others more certain and extensive, but is generally superfluous in English etymologies. If a word is easily deduced from a Saxon origin, we do not often enquire further, since we know it to be parent of the Saxon dialect, but when it is borrowed from the French, I shall shew whence it is apparently derived. Where a Saxon root cannot be found, the defect may be supplied by kindred languages, which will be generally done with much liberality by the writers of our